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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 001995

SIPDIS

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2018

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SUBJECT: SAMAK ADMINISTRATION EASILY SURVIVES NO-CONFIDENCE
VOTE

REF: BANGKOK 1951 (DEBATE BEGINS)

Classified By: Acting DCM Anne Casper, reason: 1.4 (d).

11. (U) On the morning of June 27, following three days of debate, House legislators voted almost entirely along partisan lines on the Democrat Party's no-confidence motion that targeted Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej and seven other cabinet members. There were up to 445 votes in play. Samak received 280 votes in his favor, 162 against, with one abstention. Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama, who came under harsh attack for his agreement with Cambodia on the Preah Vihear temple's disposition (reftel), received slightly less support -- 278 in favor, 162 against, with two abstentions. The other targeted cabinet members received comparable support. (Of the 480 House seats, 10 are vacant because of real or alleged election irregularities. The targeted cabinet members are constitutionally prohibited from voting on the resolution, and all other People's Power Party cabinet members, as well as the formal House leaders, agreed in a show of sportsmanship not to vote.)

12. (C) Comment: The result was as expected (reftel); the debate nevertheless appeared to serve both sides' interests. The Democrats were able to air criticism of the government and demonstrate their commitment to serving as a credible opposition party. The government, meanwhile, showed its willingness to accommodate the opposition's legitimate parliamentary efforts and to provide an outlet for the expression of criticism; the government also shifted media attention away from the agenda of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which had recently captured headlines for its march on Government House.

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